Ongoing professional development is a necessary part of a successful program. For Annie’s Project, this takes place at two different levels: state and national. The Annie’s Project National Leadership Team works to stay connected with its educators through a monthly conference call on the third Friday of the month, as well as through face-to-face opportunities such as their annual Annie’s Project meeting held in conjunction with the annual Extension RME conference. They also provide specific, focused training for smaller groups of educators around the nation through group training and retraining based on Annie’s Project methodology changes and area needs.

**Annie’s Project Educators Talk**

Professional Development

Every third Friday of the month, Annie’s Project educators from around the nation meet on a conference call or webinar to discuss various topics. October’s meeting was a webinar presented by Dr. Mandi Anderson, Iowa State University Research Scientist, and Tim Eggers, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Field Agricultural Economist, on “Annie’s Project, Level I, Standard Course, Evaluation and Impact Reporting”. The archived webinar can be viewed at https://connect.extension.iastate.edu/p3mg159j6mf/.

On September’s conference call, Annie’s Project educators discussed ongoing professional development needs. Jennifer Boyles, Annie’s Project State Coordinator from South Carolina, indicated interest in facilitation skills. With their event being a conference style program, they are working on a tight schedule which makes good facilitation important. Bonnie Collins agreed and added, “Understanding learning styles is key.” Three primary facilitation concerns emerged from the conversation:

1. How to manage speakers
2. How to manage the clock to allow participant discussion time
3. Possible special class topics for the sixth session

**Managing Speakers**

Jennifer Boyles of South Carolina found cutting off some of her speakers was difficult at their state’s first Annie’s Project event this past spring and especially when the audience was engaged and
asking questions. However, she stressed, sometimes it's necessary to stop them and wondered about ways to make this task less challenging. Volunteer presenters can be a bit of a challenge, agreed Winifred McGee, Annie’s Project State Coordinator from Pennsylvania. She experienced personal success by making things more interactive and also found that planning with guest speakers helped. Three other tips included:

1. Tell speakers about the total program ahead of time. (Jennifer Boyles, SC)
2. Be specific with your topic request. (Bonnie Collins, NY)
3. Tell speakers in advance you will dictate time and topics. (Jason Johnson, TX)

**Managing the Clock for Discussion**

Bonnie Collins, Annie’s Project State Co-Coordinator from New York, emphasized we also need to be cognizant of the need to plan time to talk in the Annie’s Project sessions. Women want this opportunity to share and it’s important speakers don’t speak the whole time. She also noted, while it’s important to make sure speakers don’t speak the entire time, it’s absolutely necessary for facilitators to be “flexible” and fill in if speakers go short, as well. Call participants agreed skill building would be helpful with regards to managing the clock during sessions.

**Special Class Topic Options**

Jason Johnson, Annie’s Project State Coordinator from Texas, indicated an interest in others sharing their ideas of optional topics when letting class participants decide what they want to discuss in the final class. When it’s wide open, he’s found, it makes for strange requests. For instance, one group wanted to learn how to weld. The group later agreed to direct marketing instead of welding. Topic ideas generated by the conference call included:

1. Direct marketing and web pages – some participants actually taught the others (Bonnie Collins, NY)
2. Quickbooks – one day session (Bonnie Collins, NY)
3. Agritourism and value added agriculture, direct marketing and high tunnel production (Marsha Laux, IA)
4. Leadership, health – stress/healthy foods (Marsha Laux, IA)
5. Rejuvenated personal self – motivational speakers (Jennifer Boyles, SC)
6. Role of activist groups and their effects; Ag Policy – questions about farm bill, what is in it, how process works (Mary Sobba, MO)
7. USDA and various agencies (i.e. where the DNR comes into play) - state level regulations, for instance: DNR changed rules on CAFO’s in MO (Mary Sobba, MO)
8. Grant writing (Bonnie Collins, NY)
9. Conflict resolution (Bonnie Collins, NY)

In addition to these three main discussion points, educators expressed interest in further professional development on making sure educators are reaching their audience (trying to find new audiences and keeping them engaged in the program), training on building state and national Annie’s Project web presence, creating a professional development database which would include good presenters for professional development at state training/retraining sessions, and including “site assistant” help in grant applications because of the importance and great value those doing the behind the scenes planning add to an Annie’s Project success. In addition, Madeline Shultz shared she would like to see Annie’s Project facilitators share expertise across state lines during team meetings or professional development programs.
National Meetings Provide Opportunities for Professional Development

by Lani McKinney

Annie’s Project held their second annual meeting this year in Memphis, TN in conjunction with the national Extension RME conference held at the Peabody Hotel on March 20, 2012. Annie’s Project educators who attended agreed there was value in attending the national Annie’s Project meetings the past few years. Educators from New York not only felt they had great value, but loved the introduction of the Level II Managing for Today and Tomorrow curricula so they could take it back to their state to use it. Educators from Missouri concurred. They also found value in face-to-face time and found individual conversations were helpful as well as group conversations. “It’s interesting to hear from older states, and refreshing to see new states coming on,” said Mary Sobba, State Coordinator for Missouri. While people’s budgets are tight, travel scholarships from ANNIES or other organizations help make it an affordable way for state educators to meet once a year face-to-face. Rikki Ruiz, State Coordinator for Idaho, is excited she has received funding and will be attending the 2013 conference and Annie’s Project national meeting in April 2013.

ANNIES is currently planning co-events. We hope to see you there!

ANNIES Partners with SARE

by Lani McKinney

An important role of the Annie’s Project National Leadership Team is to provide initial training and ongoing professional development for incoming new states and regions. This year, there were two regional trainings partially supported by North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) - http://www.northcentralsare.org - and Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) - http://www.southernsare.org.

Professional Development Program in Mississippi

On August 22-23, Mississippi State University and Alcorn State University hosted a workshop partially funded by a Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Professional Development Program (PDP) grant, ES12-113 – “Building the Capacity of Educators to Help Women Farmers and Ranchers in Southern States Improve Agricultural Sustainability Using Annie’s Methodologies.” Dr. Bobbie Shaffett, Mississippi State University (MSU) Extension Professor in Family Resource Management and Annie’s Project Co-State Coordinator for MS, and Sylvia Clark, MSU Program Coordinator, took the lead in planning the successful Biloxi, MS event. Cheryl Griffith, Annie’s Project State Coordinator for NE, worked with Madeline Schultz, Annie’s Project Co-Director, and SARE’s Gary Lesoing to organize a regional training in Grand Island, NE earlier in the year. Educators from eight states attended the June 2012 Nebraska event as reported on in the June newsletter (http://www.extension.iastate.edu/annie/1Newsletters/2012/June2012ANNIESnews.pdf).

Held at the Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center, the Mississippi workshop was attended by Extension agents from Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina. Educators were trained on delivery of Annie’s Project programs and learned skills to share with other Extension colleagues, as well. Candace Pollock represented Southern SARE and shared information about sustainability with the group. In the SARE press release written by Candace (http://www.southernsare.org/News-and-Media/Press-Releases/Bringing-Annie-s-Project-to-More-Southern-Region-States), Susan Kelly, Annie’s Project Co-State Coordinator for Florida, was quoted as saying, "We facilitate Annie’s Project at six sites in Florida and this workshop will help me improve the quality of training for the site facilitators, as well as enable me to bring more Extension agents on board and train them so we can bring Annie’s Project to all corners of our state.” Susan also serves as the Sumter County Extension Director for the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. The professional development program helped strengthen Annie’s Project in several states and also encouraged new states to come on board. As a result, Ruth Brock will be holding the first ever Annie’s Project in Alabama starting on January 10, 2013 in Asheville.
Many states hold one or two meetings a year with their state groups to plan for the upcoming year and provide professional development opportunities, program training and updates. State coordinators from four states (Delaware/Maryland, Iowa, North Dakota, and Missouri) took the time to share their state’s training activities.

**Delaware/Maryland – Shannon Dill, State Co-Coordinator**

Annie’s Project is not new to Delaware and Maryland. They’ve had 357 women graduate from Annie’s Project since starting the program in 2008. They are in all geographic regions of Maryland and partner with Delaware. Because agriculture in Maryland varies so much, facilitators (mainly comprised of Extension educators) are allowed a lot of what Shannon defines as “wiggle room” for presentation topics and speakers. “Those involved love Annie’s Project and the women they work with,” shares Shannon Dill.

Delaware and Maryland held their training, a strategic planning meeting discussing Annie’s Project I, Annie’s Project II and a regional Women in Ag conference, on August 16th at the Wye Branch Manor in Centreville, MD. The twenty attendees included support staff and IT. They held a short session on personality iq’s, a session their state facilitators teach, and were also thrilled to have Ruth Hambleton, Co-Director and Founder of Annie’s Project, conference in for an introduction of Annie’s Project II.

To make the best use of their Annie’s Project educators’ time, they had a list of things for each facilitator or site to prepare and bring along so everyone has the opportunity to share experiences. “We also provide them with the have to’s including topics, sponsor information and timelines for marketing,” shares Shannon. Time management is such a huge part of any event, including the Annie’s Project courses. The first time around they planned the courses down to the minute and underestimated the amount of participant sharing they would have. Since then, they have added/built in more discussion time and it’s “been wonderful to hear all of the women’s stories,” Shannon raves.

What should other states consider adding to their training? “Discuss and outline what is flexible and what is not flexible in the class including topics, speakers, dates, times, budget, etc.,” says Shannon, “We developed an Annie’s Project manual this year for our state to help educators new and old. Budget accounts change yearly and we have a new registration system… We also use our UMD wiki to post all documents and presentations for sharing (among educators).”

Why are professional development opportunities important? “It is the Extension way – to provide professional development, share ideas and collaborate,” says Shannon.

**Iowa – Marsha Laux, State Coordinator**

On September 26th & 27th, Marsha Laux held the third statewide Annie’s Project Planning meeting in Iowa since she became State Coordinator in the spring of 2011. The two day meeting focused on training for new facilitators and site assistants the first day and on professional development and planning activities for the entire Iowa Annie’s Project team on the second day. “We encouraged all trained facilitators to participate in the first day’s training as a ‘refresher’ on the basics of facilitating an Annie’s Project course, too,” emphasized Marsha. There were eight newly trained facilitators/site assistants added to Iowa’s list of qualified members, 17 attended the first day and 18 the second. Having trained educators is important. “If we have confident, competent educators, we can provide a more rewarding and enriching
experience for the participants. Ultimately it is all about empowering
the women we serve through the use of best practices,” she adds, “Our
professional development activities focused specifically on classroom
facilitation and management and on best practices for handling difficult
situations.”

Marsha brought in an expert, Dr. Ann Marie VanDerZanden, Iowa State
University (ISU) Professor and ISU Center for Excellence in Learning
and Teaching Associate Director, to speak about learning styles and
presentations skills. The training included small group discussions
utilizing various scenarios that might be encountered in an Annie’s
Project course. Participants worked together to create solutions and
suggestions for handling various scenarios. Marsha felt the scenarios
were a good way to frame the training, “Participants appreciated the
chance to learn from one another and the networking was valuable.”
Keep in mind, though, that “sufficient time needs to be allotted for this kind of activity,” she added.

Because of demands placed on Iowa’s facilitators to provide more courses around the state, Marsha decided it made
sense to include site assistants, or county paid Extension staff who help with Annie’s Project, in the statewide training
and professional development days. She saw there was confusion about the roles of site facilitators and assistants, so
Marsha came up with a written FAQs document (http://www.extension.iastate.edu/feci/annie/FAQs IA 09 2012.docx) and
“job descriptions” to clarify roles. “As a relatively new state coordinator, I found I personally needed to have more written
guidelines to follow and thus have been involved in the process of developing guidance documents now available for
other states to utilize as well,” continued Marsha. To her, having better documentation and written guidelines is one of the
more important adjustments Iowa has made.

Marsha feels it’s important to structure training that provides various learning opportunities so individual needs can be
met. Providing a variety of formats and topics keeps things interesting. Starting and ending on time and sticking to the
agenda are also important. “Don’t try to do too much in one event,” advises Marsha, “Allow enough time for networking
and for peer learning. People learn best from those they feel have the expertise and the experience in working in similar
situations. Use your team to learn from one another. This builds respect and a cohesive team of educators, also. Ask
them to help you build the training program. This helps to develop a program best suited to their learning styles and
hopefully meets their expectations.”

**Missouri – Mary Sobba & Karisha Devlin, State Co-Coordinators**

On August 28th & 29th, Mary Sobba and Karisha Devlin provided additional training for ten facilitators in Mexico, MO. The
main focus of their training, according to Mary, was to introduce the new Annie’s Project curriculum, Managing for Today
and Tomorrow, with the hope many of them would be helping teach the curriculum this winter. In addition, they wrapped
up the Annie’s Project season by “sharing the good the bad and the ugly” to work out ways to improve and things to work
on next year.

There are five things Mary tries to adhere to when planning and conducting her state’s training:

1. Seek agenda items from your facilitators.
2. Have two or three people on the planning committee (this helps to make sure you don’t forget things on the agenda.
3. Hold it somewhere with limited internet (so everyone is not on laptops the whole time).
4. Make the best use of your time – know what you want to cover and allow discussion time.
5. Start on time and be sure to be done on time, or even a little early. Do not keep people late.

For Mary, one of the most important parts of their state’s training is the time they allot for “show and tell”, a time for
facilitators to share their experiences, concerns, newly developed teaching aids, etc. “We need to be sure all classes
have the same core components, but we also need to continue finding new creative ways to present ideas,” shares Mary,
“Sharing ideas/concerns also seems to generate enthusiasm for the program. All facilitators know they have support
behind them and where to find additional resources when needed.”

When Annie’s Project first started in Missouri almost ten years ago, educators were creating things as they went with very

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*Continued on Page 6*
little to no resources. “If we needed a presentation on marketing, we designed it,” remembers Mary. Over time, though, additional facilitators became involved who took those early developed materials and made them better. In the beginning, it was about sharing what was developed. Now everyone contributes. The pool of well-known potential guest speakers has grown tremendously. Mary feels the Speaker Vetting document (http://www.extension.iastate.edu/feci/annie/grants/Vetting.pdf) developed by Tim Eggers, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach (ISUEO) Field Agricultural Economist and Annie’s Project Co-Director, and Heidi Carter, ISUEO County Education Director, in particular, is very helpful.

One of the things Mary notes about facilitator training is the importance of realizing it’s a room of peers and everyone has good ideas. In past professional development/training events, Missouri’s experienced educators have used games and hands-on activities to help new facilitators get things going. They share how they present certain topics which is very helpful. “We’ve also brainstormed how to use evaluation in our reporting system,” shares Mary, “We have more skills in the training room – some are good at web design, some at negotiating with campus administrators, others enjoy evaluation… more people, more skills and knowledge.”

**North Dakota – Willie Huot, State Coordinator**

Willie Huot held North Dakota’s most recent training session in Mandan, ND on September 17th & 18th. On the first day, 30 attendees focused on planning the 2013 North Dakota Annie’s Project classes. This included an introduction and overview of Annie’s Project, showcasing pertinent software programs, review of the Annie’s Project Facilitator’s manual ND developed to guide facilitators in planning and conducting Annie’s Project in their location, identifying and working with local presenters, program administration, and participating in a mentor/mentee program. On the second day, they focused on planning and conducting the North Dakota Farm/Ranch Transition Planning session to be held in November and December of 2012 and again in February of 2013. This included introduction and overview of the Farm/Ranch Transition Planning program, review of the facilitator’s handbook, showcasing possible interactive activities to consider using, showcasing the Legacy Project website and other relevant websites, working out program logistics, and participating in a mentor/mentee program. Since many of the facilitators involved in the ND Annie’s Project are also involved in the ND Farm/Ranch Transition Planning project, Willie has now structured the in-service to plan both of these programs.

North Dakota facilitators discuss Annie’s Project at a recent training session in Mandan, ND.

Willie is a veteran in providing training and professional development to Annie’s Project in his state. For several years now he has been holding two planning meetings each year – the first held in mid/late May, a day long session, to recap/review the Annie’s Project sessions conducted in January and February and to begin planning for upcoming sessions, and the second, a day and a half long session, held in late September to showcase potential software and resources for teaching, workout logistics of upcoming classes and update the facilitator’s manual (updated annually). North Dakota’s Extension staff are not required to attend, but are strongly encouraged to, in particular, if they have or are planning to host an Annie’s Project in the recent past/near future. According to Willie, “Sessions are organized to ensure all who participate have the opportunity to provide input in the planning and evaluation process. Several of the more experienced facilitators are asked to conduct some of the training content.” Most of the time, they involve someone from the Annie’s Project National Leadership Team to participate via ITV or conference calls. Willie notes both Ruth Hambleton and Madeline Schultz have participated in ND’s training using these methods. At the conclusion, attendees have made decisions on changes to incorporate and identified most of the sites planning to host Annie’s Project in the upcoming year.

One of the most important things for Willie is making sure facilitators are meeting together “at the same location to focus on the planning of these sessions and to structure the sessions in a way that everyone has an opportunity to give input on the design, resources and methodology used to deliver these educational programs.” Over the years, Willie has learned a lot and gives the following tips for those planning a professional development or statewide planning event:
• Identify staff members who are enthusiastic and passionate about being part of a team and give high priority to planning and delivering Annie’s Project.
• Make training opportunities of the team a high priority.
• Be willing to allow all members of the team to help “shape” the program design and delivery for their particular site/region.
• Seek partners willing to contribute resources (finances, expertise, material or other needs) to bring this program to their respective communities. Recognize these sponsors appropriately.

“In my view,” Willie insists, “these training sessions are the primary factor we are able to conduct the statewide educational programs (Annie’s Project & Farm/Ranch Transition Planning) in the manner we do. Facilitators that attend make these programs ‘high priority’ on their annual plan of work. They make a significant commitment of time and budget resources to participate. We have had very few effective facilitators not make the commitment to participate in these sessions. It really helps to build the ‘team’ attitude among all the staff involved.”

Wish List Fun:

If you had endless resources and could do anything you want to provide Professional Development to Annie’s Project educators in your state, what would you do?

• “Take facilitators on a week-long, all-expenses paid retreat to a peaceful and conducive setting where we could focus on building our communication, conflict management, classroom facilitation, and our course preparation and planning skills. This would allow for uninterrupted, in-depth and focused professional development that afforded us time to network and to brainstorm and develop on ways to improve our effectiveness in reaching and teaching the agricultural women we serve.” (Marsha Laux, Iowa)

• “Give everyone an Ipad. This year we gave them Tervis Tumbler water bottles with Annie’s Project logos on them.” (Shannon Dill, Maryland)

• “Provide portable ITV units for each ag business specialist so we could use them in any county across the state and share teaching loads and reach more people.” (Mary Sobba, Missouri)

• “Organize a two day in-service (all expenses paid) for all facilitators to meet for planning and organizing Annie’s Project for the upcoming year. I would also involve at least six women who have participated in previous Annie’s Project courses to participate in the session to talk about the impact Annie’s Project has had on their lives. I would invite Ruth Hambleton to travel to ND to participate in such a session.” (Willie Huot, North Dakota)

Annie’s Project to Celebrate 10th Anniversary in 2013

The first Annie’s Project course was delivered by Ruth Hambleton in Centralia, IL in February 2003. Gigi O’Neal, Annie’s Project facilitator in Ohio, set a goal for her state to have 10 Annie’s Project classes (both Annie’s Project Standard Level I and Managing for Today and Tomorrow Level II courses) for the 10th anniversary. They surpassed this goal and have 12 courses scheduled for 2013. Chris Bruynis is the Annie’s Project State Coordinator for Ohio. Stay tuned for other ways we plan to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Annie’s Project.
Idaho’s Annie’s Project hosted a one-day, Level II Annie’s Workshop on retirement planning on May 8th and featured several guest speakers from around the Boise Valley. This fall, they are also holding their class series in October-November. Rikki Ruiz, Annie’s Project State Coordinator for Idaho, is in the middle of teaching an Annie’s Project class at the University of Idaho Parma Research Station. They have a growing interest list of women farmers and ranchers who are excited to take this class. The Idaho Annie’s Project team has been actively recruiting other Extension Educators across the state in hopes of adding more class locations for Annie’s Project. Rikki Ruiz plans to hold an Annie’s Project training session in conjunction with her state’s Extension Annual Meetings in order to generate more interest in bringing Annie’s Project to other areas of her state.